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Poems of Nature and
Sentiment - 1894

Wickenden

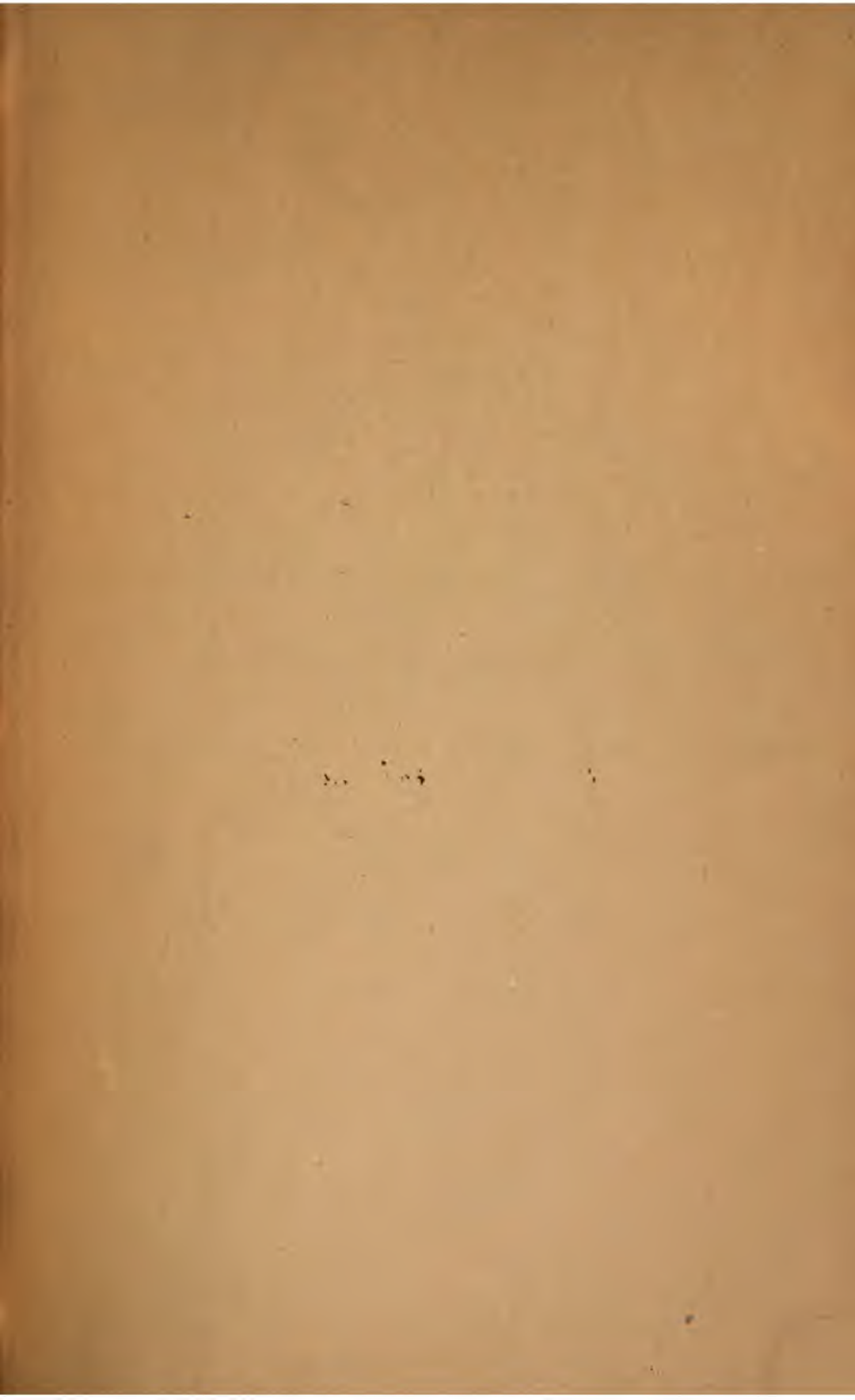
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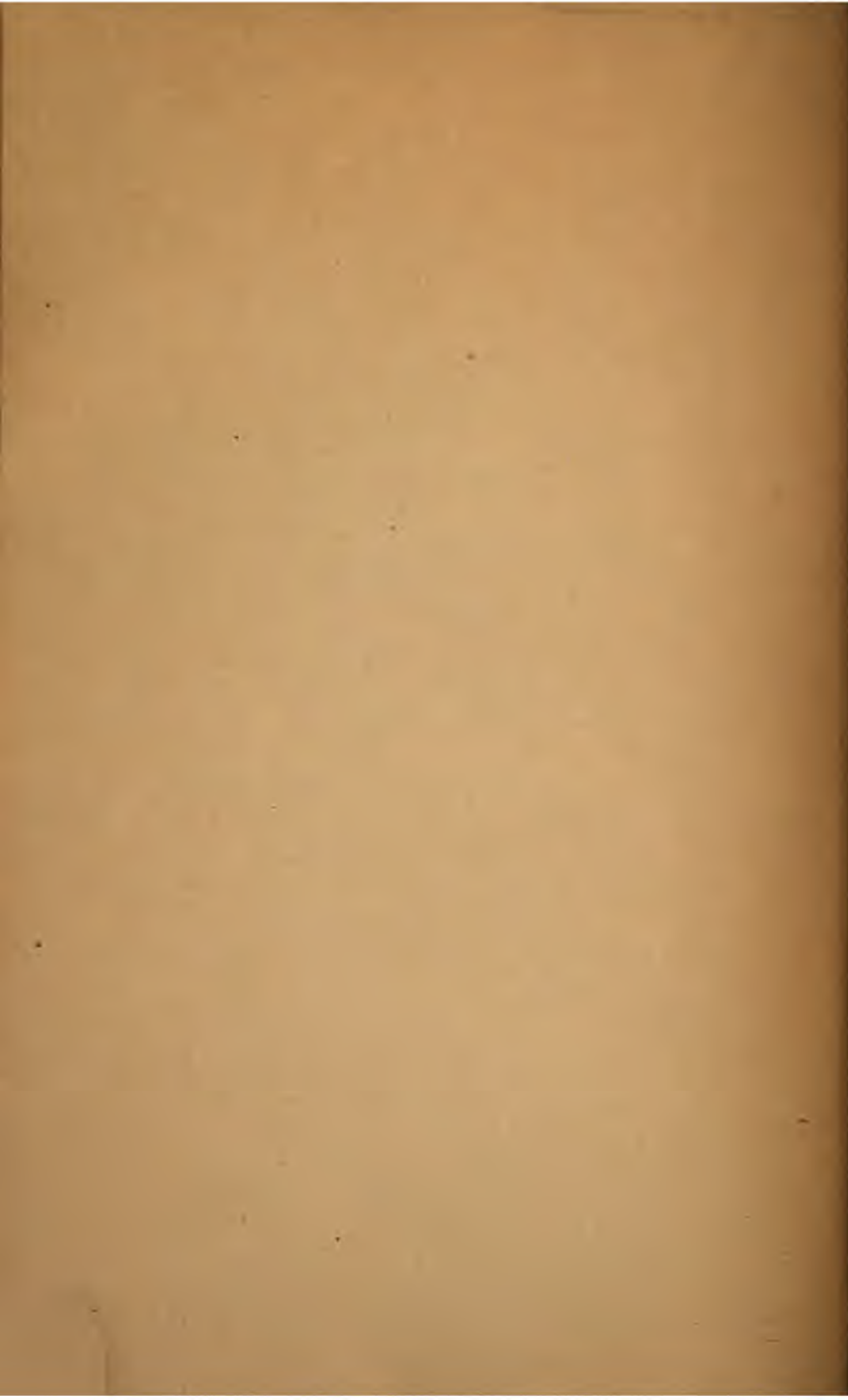


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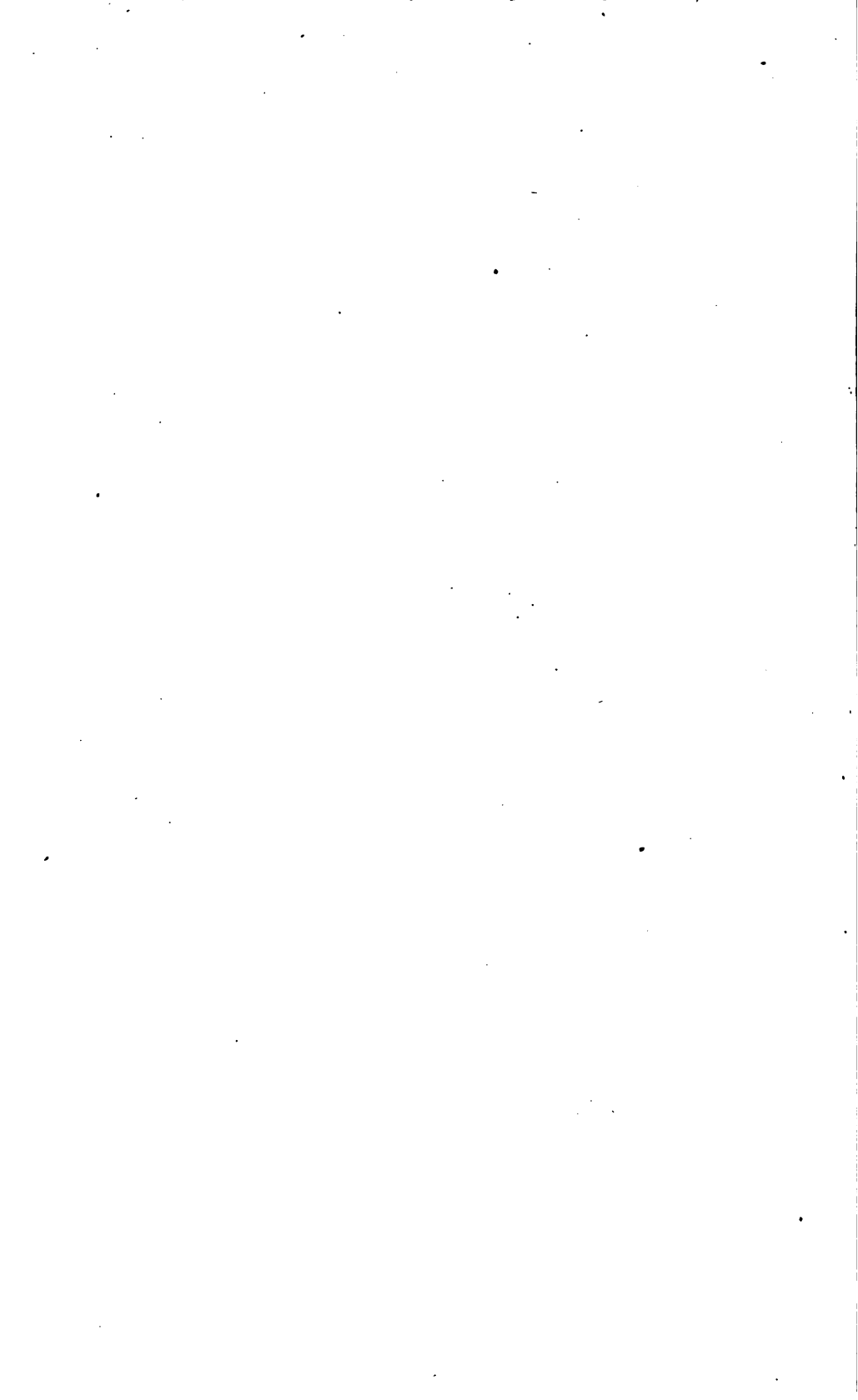
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Poems of Nature and Sentiment

By Robert F. Wickenden

Send forth thy ships upon the sea
And they shall come again to thee;
Though some fall prey to wind and rock,
Others the angry waves shall mock.
And laden, sail to thee.










Robt. J. Wickenden

With the author's compliments

**POEMS OF
NATURE AND SENTIMENT**

BY
ROBERT J. WICKENDEN

No.  146

**FREDERICK KEPPEL & CO.
NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND PARIS
1894**

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Col. J. W. Higginson.

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TO MY MOTHER
THESE FIRST-FRUITS OF VERSE ARE
MOST AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED



PREFACE



IDEAS have come and sentiments have sometimes seized me, to express which the brush or crayon seemed inadequate. Instead of taking graphic form, these resolved themselves into words and rhyme, and I have noted them down at odd intervals for some years past.

The often repeated request of friends is my only excuse for now putting them into print.

If verse has occasionally amused me, painting has been my more constant occupation, and to arrive at poetry in both is my hope and aim.

R. J. W.

NEW YORK, October 15, 1894.

ENVOI

SEND forth thy ships upon the sea,
And they shall come again to thee;
Though some fall prey to wind and rock,
Others the angry waves shall mock,
And laden, sail to thee.

POEMS OF
NATURE AND SENTIMENT



THE FIRST CAUSE

WE seek by strangely devious paths,
Through many a tangle try
To reach where Life's unfailing source
Beyond our ken may lie.

We see the flash of light that wrecks
Frail matter as it falls;
We hear the echoing thunder-peal
As cloud to cloud recalls.

But whence this strange imponderous force,
How its wild power grows,
Nor man, nor mortal, bard, nor seer,
In certainty yet knows.

The ancient world, with simple faith,
To Jove its power referred;
And after many centuries passed
We find they scarcely erred:

THE FIRST CAUSE

For Jove, or God, or Power Supreme,
Or First Great Cause of all,
To thee with humble, reverent hearts
Must all earth's children fall.

Thou art the source of life and light,
With vast, infinite power;
Thou ever wast, will be, and art —
E'en fill'st this mortal hour.

The sun thou giv'st us by its heat
Hath gendered us to life,
And all our race sustains and keeps
Through strong magnetic strife.

We cannot tell how linked and joined
Is all this varied force;
We only know it springs from thee —
Thou Prime Generic Source.

And so the mystery still exists,
Let man strive as he may;
"Thus far, no farther," bars us back.
We cannot find the way.

Nor will we strive impatiently
To span this bridgeless sea;
But as a child, in confidence,
We give our hands to Thee.

Content to feel that love and light,
Thou round our path doth shower,
We here on earth a little while
Will build a pilgrim bower.

THE FIRST CAUSE

In kinds and tints as various
As flowers of the field,
In colors multifarious
As prism's rays may yield :

So giv'st thou love to mortal man,
Ambrosial food from Heaven,
That all our dead inertial self
Doth quicken with its leaven.

Man in his books hath written down
In pictured black and white,
All that his childish fancy formed,
Or pleased his opening sight ;

But in that wondrous book of law,
Thy finger true hath traced,
Nature, 't is called — from thence Thy words
Can never be effaced.

Truth, truth, not fictions mortal-made
Is what we seek to know,
To make our lives more full of joy
While journeying here below.

Mayhap the mystery farther on
Will vanish in clear day,
But now a word of hopeful song
May cheer the lonely way.

THE MINE

DEEP down in veins of silent thought
The mind doth dig its precious ore;
By subtle toil to surface brought,
It fills the world with light and lore.

ZEPHYR

AS odors of lily-buds, odors of roses,
Wafted softly from over the sea,
So at the dawning, this summer's morning,
Came as a spirit my Muse to me.

THE BORDER LAND

MANY miles we go and come
In far lands or nearer home,
Yet no mystery we find:
Naught more moves us heart and mind

Than when bidding sad good-byes,
First looking in long-absent eyes;
The hours when day and darkness meet,
Old Ocean washing Earth's fair feet;

The far horizon bathed in mist,
Where pearl dissolves in amethyst;
The first faint breath of infant life,
The closing eye on all earth strife—

These through some strange, mysterious law
Fill all our souls with reverent awe:
Here joins the Infinite with Time
In known and unknown's mystic clime.

AS WARM AND MELTING SUNSHINE

AS warm and melting sunshine
Bursts Winter's prison door,
When forth comes ardent Springtime
To tear his garments hoar,—

So hath thy glowing spirit
Subdued my icy heart.
Let still thine influence cheer it,
Till lovelier graces start;

And all in joy united,—
Song, sunshine, perfume, flowers,—
Waft o'er our souls delighted
Sweet peace through summer hours.

AT TWILIGHT

Reprinted by permission from Harper's Weekly.

T IS not when bright and garish day
With cloudless sky and bird-song clear
Makes nature's face seem fresh and gay,
That mysteries to our souls draw near.

But as the setting sun doth melt
With crimson fire the light to shade,
When night draws near, the dew is felt,
And silence fills the woodland glade :

Then in the deepening twilight glow,
Rise shadowy forms of faces fond ;
Then o'er our spirits seem to flow
The peace and rest which lie beyond

And in the gloaming hangs a star
That beckons on to faith and trust :
A brighter day cannot be far,
For we are more than earth's mere dust.

AFTER THE DARKNESS

AFTER the darkness cometh light,
O'er passed storms the rainbow bright,
And winter's silence with the spring
Sweet birds do break in carolling.

So after sadness cometh joy,
Doubt ends in faith without alloy,
And inmost recesses of heart
At thy words, love, fresh echoes start.

A TWILIGHT PASTORAL

DEEP and dark grows the woodland glade
In the twilight soft and dim,
While the shepherd boy and the nightingale
Pipe forth their evening hymn ;

When all is hushed, save the tinkling bells
Of the quietly browsing sheep,
Or the drowsy hum of the insects,—low,—
That lulls the world to sleep.

L'APPROCHE DU SOIR

THE grain that is ready to fall,
The day that is ready to die,
The valley that soon must be passed,
And the cross ever lifted on high :

Let me patiently wait by the cross,
The end of my journey is near ;
Though night with its darkness surround,
God is nigh, and no evil I fear.

HAIL! CYNTHIA, QUEEN

HAIL! Cynthia, Queen, with softly glowing beam
Thou chastely fill'st the bosom of the starry night.
Thy spreading argent zones along the horizon gleam,
Each proud incoming wave thou crown'st with pearly
light.

With fiercely scorching face Apollo's fiery flame
All day has flashed with tireless, cloudless eyes,—
A golden-crimson king, eve saw his power wane,
And thy sweet, calm, majestic presence rise.

All feel thy charm and own thy regal sway,
Both lovers by the shore and sailors far at sea;
With pure and hallowed light thou cheer'st the lonely way,
And draw'st all human souls in magic spell to thee.

Queen of our night, with pure and soothing ray
Bless this tired world, our never resting earth;
E'en till at morn thou gently fad'st away,
Would I fain watch and sing thy beauteous worth.

STRANGE, NEW JOY HAS SWEETLY COME

STRANGE, new joy has sweetly come,
Whence or how I scarce can tell:
But a feeling pure and deep
Seemeth in my heart to dwell.

As a clear uprisen sun
After long and darksome night,
So its radiant beams do shine,
Filling all my soul with light.

TOKENS

TO a maiden gave I a snow-white dove,
Innocent token of our true love,
When the flowers of spring were budding and blowing,
And life's fresh joys through our hearts were flowing.

In autumn she brings me a golden sheaf,
Full ripened and bound with the crimson leaf,
When all life's cares we 've shared in knowing,
And the shadows of life are longer growing.

THE MILKMAID'S SONG

WHAT need have I of gold and pearl
To wreath within my tresses?
What need have I of costly gems
To spangle o'er my dresses?

By every hedge the cowslips grow,
In every field the daisies,
And myriad flowers of rainbow hues
O'erfill the woodland mazes.

Like countless diamonds glints the dew
The tender leaves adorning,
The lark mounts high in song and sky
To welcome back the morning.

The lazy herd draw lowing near,
And all their creamy treasure
They gladly yield, as to my song
It flows in cadenced measure.

I envy not the smoky town
Its angry noise and bustle,
While I may feel through grass and trees
The zephyr's gentle rustle.

Talk not to me of other home
Than these sweet fields of clover:
I love their fragrance far too well
To ever turn a rover.

**TIMES ARE, I HATE THE ROARING CITY'S
RUSH AND RATTLE**

TIMES are, I hate the roaring city's rush and rattle;
Times are, I hate the clash and din of life's hard battle:
Then to the silent woods I fly,
And as on mossy bank I lie
And listen to the soothing breeze
Make softest music through the trees,
It gently drives away all pain,
Till peace and joy draw near again.

DECEMBER

A GOLDEN glow of sunset the sleeping woods hath kissed,
A crescent, dim and silvery, shines mellow through the
mist;

The night wind low and gently breathes sighings through
the trees;

Anon, a dry brown leaflet falls slowly through the breeze

To join its myriad comrades that rustle as we tread —
Bright Summer's hope and glory now lying sere and dead.

Thus after glorious Autumn doth sombre Winter mourn
That fairest flowers of Springtime to death and dark are
borne.

MY HEART IS THINE

WOULD I could stifle my deep love for thee,
Would I could burst from its bonds and be free,
But strive as I may it still holds me fast,
And the hope of my freedom is now overpast:
My heart is thine.

Long 'gainst love's current I 've striven in vain,
Struggled unceasing in anguish and pain,
Let now the tide take me and bear me away,
Drifting me, landing me, where'er it may:
My heart is thine.

I sink in thy love, let it cover me o'er,
By its vortex constrained be forgot evermore,
This soul-conquering power I cannot resist,
Forgive or condemn me, I dare not desist:
My heart is thine.

Oft at love's fires I 've laughed in defiance;
Thought myself safe, in firm will placed reliance,
But here I surrender my all to the flame,
Though it burn and consume me, leave naught but a name:
All, all, I 'm thine.

AT MONT ORGUEIL

WHERE Mont Orgueil's towers rise proudly from sea,
Of Jersey's fair island the guard and the key,
In a fort built by Cæsar or some of his race,
Sweet Ada sat sewing, I, watching her face.

"I believe," said sweet Ada, "your heart is as cold
As these rocks, and as hard as the battlements old."
She dared not look up with her modest brown eyes,
Yet I scarce could help hearing the deeply drawn sighs.

In cigarette smoke I assumed nonchalance
And appeared to be scanning the fair coast of France.
Yet oft I confess the horizon was broken,
As a kindlier word than was wont would be spoken.

The sun, with a bounty of gold richly blest,
In opulent glory sank down to his rest,
And when Dian was rising through silvery mist,
Was it strange, or a wonder, if Ada I kissed?

BEAUMONT, ISLE OF JERSEY, 1884.

DESTINY

"Tu te tiendras solitaire et silencieux."

OUT from the silence all alone thou camest
Into that silence thou again must go;
A few brief hours of sun and shade thou namest
Before an end swift comes to joy or woe.

Then whence the soul, and whither silent goes it?
What lies beyond the morn and eve of life?
From what deep source, to what great ocean flows it,
In change of quiet peace or noisy strife?

But One alone our destiny well knoweth,
The life He gives 't is His to take again;
On mortal fields from seed He freely soweth,
'T is His, not ours, to reap the golden grain.

Then faithful resting, let us be unmoved
Through all the passing round of calm or storm,
Though lightning-wrecked or by soft zephyr soothed
Be these frail atoms of terrestrial form.

The touch divine can never be destroyed,
And reaching far beyond all power of time,
Its spark of fire in matter's bonds now cloyed,
A spirit soon set free shall brightly shine.

Then have no fear for what may e'er betide us,
In laying down this coarser cloak of clay,
A Father's hand will always gently guide us
To happier, purer realms of clearer day.

THE SNOW-KING'S GIFT

THE Snow-king said, as he rose one morn,
From his bed in the silvery sky,
As to-morrow the day is when Christ was born,
To brighten the earth I 'll try.

So he clothed himself in a feathery gown,
Threw o'er it a cloak of gray,
Jumped into his sled, soft with eider-down,
And drove to the South away.

And he sent before with a warning voice,
His friend the North Wind bard,
Who loudly sang some chants of his choice
From his old throat sere and hard.

And the people they shivered to hear his song,
While the earth grew tighter and dry;
All ready for gifts when the king came along
That should flutter down from the sky.

As at eve the king reached the southernmost place
Where he purposed stopping for rest;
The radiant glow of his smiling red face
Shone round from the East to the West.

THE SNOW-KING'S GIFT

And when all was darkened, and cold, and still,
He ordered his cloudy train
To cast forth their crystal diamonds till
The dawn should bring light again.

And faith! they worked with a hearty goodwill,
Nor deeming their labor vain,
Though the sun with his burning glance could kill
All their treasures of frozen rain.

Then at daybreak the king rose up to behold
His mandate accomplished well,
So he flew swift back with his courtiers bold,
In their palace of ice to dwell.

A MORNING WALK

Written at the age of sixteen.

I ROSE up early from my couch,
And hastily walked out
Intent to look upon the face
Of nature round about.

'T was early and the orb of day
Had not as yet arisen;
Yet countless glorious rays proclaimed
He soon would leave his prison.

My steps were turned toward a wood
Whence came melodious sound,
From thousand throats of sweet-voiced birds
Trilling a merry round.

The flowers and all the fresh green grass,
Were hung with pearly dew,
And from these beauties radiant came,
A fragrance rich and new.

I followed up a little brook
Which through the meadow went,
Where lay the sleepy cattle still
In lazy calm content.

A MORNING WALK

I looked upon the little cot
That in the valley lay,
Whence upward rose the curling smoke
To usher in the day.

Full many things I saw and learned
On Nature's endless page,
Whose writer is the mighty God
That lives from age to age.

The sun rose up, the day began,
And I to haste away,
Yet memories of that pleasant morn
Will ever by me stay.

1877.

THE SIREN

MOONLIGHT is glancing,
Like fairies dancing,
Gaily we 're prancing,
Over the waves.

And I hear a sweet song
From a voice clear and strong
Floating lightly along
Over the waves.

Now, sailor, beware,
Dire danger lurks there,
Fly fast from her lair,
Over the waves.

CONSOLATION .

THINK not when dear ones pass from sight,
We lose their sacred presence too.
An unseen influence still may bless
All that in faith we think or do.

And though at times the way be dark
With care and griefs that still increase,
The sun shines clear above the clouds
And all life's storms shall end in peace.

Then let us bravely bear what comes
To bow us down with grief and pain,
Knowing that broken bonds of love
In heaven shall be joined again.

NEW YORK, 1882.

THOU ART MINE INSPIRATION

THOU art mine inspiration,
And thou my vision bright,
My waking adoration
And latest thought at night.

From thy pure fount of beauty
My soul drinks full and deep,
To nerve for sternest duty,
Or soothe to balmy sleep.

THEY SAY THAT ALL LOVE IS ILLUSION

THEY say that all love is illusion,
O then is illusion most sweet,
When our souls melt in blissful confusion,
'T is heaven draws nigh as we meet.

Let us bask then in joy and in gladness,
Too soon will the night-shades draw near,
Let us banish all sorrow and sadness,
That come with the autumn leaves sere.

TEACH ME TO LOVE

MY heart is hard and cold,
Mine eyes to bear the light
Of thy sweet vision bright,
No steadfast gaze can hold.
Teach me to love!

On self's own narrow poise,
I see swift passing life
Go by in restless strife,
With vague unreal joys.
Teach me to love!

When shall these bands of night
Burst from my aching soul?
Shall e'er the hoped-for goal
Break on my longing sight?
Teach me to love!

CHICAGO AND ART

A PROPHECY

O CITY, great in quantity
Of money, people, things,
What though thou yieldst not yet the light
More ancient culture brings!

Thy youthful, careless, vigorous life —
So prodigal of strength —
May scorn the subtler sentiments
And hold them at arm's length.

Wherefore shouldst thou fatigue thy brain
To prove æsthetic truth,
Would that upraise the price of grain
Or sell the hog uncouth?

What reck'st thou of the ideal world,
When "realty 's on the boom"?
Thy bound'ries spread North, West, and South;
For all the world there 's room.

I would not check the happy growth
Of thy all virile powers,
Nor change these busy marts of trade
To vine-clad, rose-filled bowers.

Yet now I see thee turn thy gaze
On beauteous Art, the Queen,
It needs no wise man's guess to tell
What such deep glances mean.

CHICAGO AND ART

Yes, youth Chicago, thou 'rt in love,
Soon we shall hear the news
Of thy engagement fast and sure,
To wed this peerless muse.

And she shall fill thy heart with joy,
And make thy home more sweet;
The world will far and wide rejoice
When strength and beauty meet.

The West and East, and North and South,
Be filled with well-earned fame,
No city on the earth's broad crust
Hath yet had greater name.

Then fear thee not, thou valiant youth,
To woo this lovely maid,
Enjoy the sweets she brings thee now,
Ere strong young manhood fade.

And if it be permitted still
To pierce some distant year,
I see a race of great good men
Thy fruitful union cheer.

The mothers of this radiant Queen
Have filled the world with light,
Far may their lineage be prolonged,
To banish hideous night.

HOME'S HAVEN

MEN may offend thee,
Passion may rend thee,
Sick you may grow with the mad, savage world;
Though all may hate thee,
Joys still await thee,
When in Home's Haven safe sails are furled.

Within its circling arms
Life yields thee untold charms,
Grants to the full of the cup that restores;
There every faithful heart
Gives thee its generous part,
Draws thee still nearer Elysian shores.

Loudly the storm may beat,
Ice-cold or fever-heat
Torture and rack with an unceasing pain;
Soon we forget them all
When sounds the welcome call,
"Come, wanderer, rest in Home's Haven again."

